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News Release



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SERVICE FINDS MOJAVE DESERT PLANT DOES NOT WARRANT LISTING

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that desert cymopterus – a plant native to the Mojave Desert - does not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act at this time. The Service made this determination after assessing the best scientific and commercial information available on the past, present, and future threats faced by this species.

This status review of the desert cymopterus was completed in response to a petition filed March 2002 by the Center for Biological Diversity and the California Native Plant Society. The Service completed an initial 90-day finding in February 2004 and concluded that a more comprehensive review was warranted. The Service has completed this review – known as a 12-month finding – and determined that this species is more abundant than previously documented and threats to its existence are minimal. A total of 105 populations of desert cymopterus occur in California's desert areas of Kern, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino counties.

“The Service will continue to review any new information concerning the status of desert cymopterus,” said Diane Noda, field supervisor for the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office. “The information will help us monitor the species and encourage conservation through voluntary efforts.”

Desert cymopterus (*Cymopterus deserticola*) belongs to the carrot family (Apiaceae). It is about six inches in height, and has tiny purple flowers.

A 2004 survey by the U.S. Army at Fort Irwin in San Bernardino County found more than 900 individual desert cymopterus within the Superior Dry Lake Basin, while three years before only 40 plants were known to exist in this area. The Bureau of Land Management also found more desert cymopterus in the Cuddeback Dry Lake Basin than had been previously documented. The March 2002 petition claimed the species is threatened because of military activities, off-highway vehicle use, grazing, trampling by livestock, and lack of conservation measures.

The Service notes that while the expansion of Fort Irwin could potentially threaten three populations of the plant, the U.S. Army has eliminated threats to a large population within the expansion area by erecting permanent fencing.

In addition, at Edwards Air Force Base – where 87 percent of the entire population of desert cymopterus occur – the military has undertaken conservation measures to protect the plants as part of its Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan: Known by its acronym, INRMP, this plan provides:

- off-highway vehicle use is primarily limited to existing routes of travel, which are not likely to threaten the plant;
- sheep and cattle grazing has been eliminated in all but one of the areas where the plant is known to exist; and,
- livestock are being removed from the one remaining area where the plant is known to occur.

A description of the Service's finding was published in today's Federal Register. The finding is also available at <http://ventura.fws.gov>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 Fish and Wildlife Management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

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